

Diocese of Bristol

**Parish Development Pack for**  
**The Church's Ministry of Healing**

(written and produced by the Bishop's Advisory Group on  
the Church's Ministry of Healing, March 2001)

# Resources for Learning

- 1            **Purpose**
  
  
- 2            **Diocese of Bradford Foundation Course: Healing Option**  
              **(An outline for learning over 5 sessions)**
  
  
- 3            **Seeking Wholeness Together**  
              **(An outline for learning over 6 sessions)**
  
  
- 4            **Other Options:**        **Acorn: "Growing a Healing Ministry"**  
                                  **Grove: "Forward in Healing"**

# 1 Purpose

*The Purpose of this Section is:*

*To provide resources for learning that can be used and/or adapted by clergy and ministry teams for use in local churches to meet the needs of those seeking a better understanding of wholeness and the Church's ministry of healing.*

Two complete study courses are provided.

Either or both courses can be used in their present form, or clergy and those they work with may wish to edit, add to, combine, or otherwise adapt the material to their own needs. All the material is provided for use in whatever way is most appropriate to local needs. No permission is required before copying.

The Bradford Course was written some years ago and therefore looks back to the 1988 Lambeth Conference report for validation of its principles. The second set of course material is more recent but nevertheless pre-dates the 2000 Report 'A Time to Heal'.

**It is recommended that the 2000 Report 'A Time Heal' should be read (at least chapters 1 - 4, 7 - 9, 11 & 14, and the Handbook to the 2000 Report) as a part of the preparation necessary to leading a training/teaching course.**

## 2 Diocese of Bradford Foundation Course: Healing Option

(by Revd. David Swales)

### Session 1: The Healing Gospel

*Jesus commanded his disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons as well as to preach the Kingdom of God Luke 9:1-2,6; 10:9,17; Mark 6:12-13; Matthew 10:7-8). This they continued to do after his Ascension, as Acts and various references in the Epistles evidence. This ministry did not cease with the, apostles but, throughout the history of the Church, God has not left himself without witness in any generation to his power to heal. (1988 Lambeth Conference)*

So said the Bishops then. Yet it must be said that throughout the history of the Church - or throughout much of it - Christ's ministry of healing has been left on the back burner. One book on the subject took as its title 'The Forgotten Talent'.

There are many reasons for this:

in recent centuries Christians have shied away from any aspect of their Faith which has appeared 'anti-rational': Christian healing falls into that category as it extends beyond the realm of scientific definitions and explanations

more significant is the fact that involvement in healing inevitably implies taking a risk: not least the risk of apparent failure. It is always tempting to take the

safer option - yet this is rarely Christ's way

sadly, too, healing has often been hi-jacked by 'rogues' - those who have cast themselves in the role of 'healer'. Christian healing knows nothing of this: only Jesus is the Healer, through the ministry of his Church.

#### Healing Rediscovered:

In recent years more and more churches have been re-discovering the healing ministry as an integral part of the Christian Faith. It is often focused upon special Services, Meetings, Advisers, Conferences. While these have a real value, in a way their aim should be to 'work themselves out of a job'. Properly understood, healing is not a separate fringe activity for enthusiasts; it is right at the heart of the Christian Faith, and should be a constant theme through the whole life of the Church.

#### Healing Understood:

##### a) 'Wholeness'

We can see all this better if we have a well-rounded understanding of healing as more than simply physical 'cure', but rather as the wholeness which Jesus brings; to body, mind and spirit. Indeed, the same Greek word means both 'healed' and 'saved'. This is especially striking in two episodes in Luke: Jesus says to a sinful woman, 'your faith has saved you', then he says to a sick woman 'your faith has healed you'. The phrase in Greek is identical (7:50 and 8:48).

##### b) 'Sign'

This wholeness will one day be experienced in all its fullness; but God gives us glimpses of it in the present. That is why Jesus' miracles (not just of healing) are sometimes called 'Signs of the Kingdom' (John 2).

##### c) A Healing Community

We also need to see the whole ministry of the Church - its love, caring, service and worship - as part of the healing ministry; rather than confining it to 'miraculous' answers to prayer.

##### d) All Healing is God's

The Church's ministry of healing also respects and works with the 'secular' healing agencies:

Should we go to the doctor? Both Christian healing and medical insights come from God and for Christian people there should be no conflict between them. Going to the doctor and receiving the laying on of hands are not mutually exclusive. You can do both. You can say your prayers and take your medicine as well. You need to view with suspicion anyone who denies that connection, who says you can only have faith if you throw away your medicine and commit yourself exclusively into the hands of God.

Some well known quotes:

- |  |   |                                |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <i>God works through doctors as well.</i>  | - | <i>Tom Smail</i>               |
| <i>The Kingdom of God is Creation Healed</i>                                     | - | <i>Hans Kung</i>               |
| <i>Reconciliation is the most radical form of Healing</i>                        | - | <i>Mgr. Michael Buckley</i>    |
| <i>Christian Healing is Jesus Christ meeting me at my point of need -</i>        |   | <i>Morris Maddocks</i>         |
| <i>A healed church is the only basis for a healed community</i>                  | - | <i>David Smethurst</i>         |
| <i>Every church should be a centre for healing</i>                               | - | <i>Leslie Newbiggin</i>        |
| <i>Healing and Salvation are two ways of describing the work of Jesus Christ</i> |   |                                |
|  | - | <i>Lambeth conference, '88</i> |
| <i>In the struggle for justice we are healed</i>                                 | - | <i>Jim Wallis</i>              |

## Session 2: Jesus' Healing Ministry

*Within the work of Christ's salvation the healing of the sick holds a significant place because by it he both demonstrated the love of God and proclaimed that the Kingdom had come in his person (Luke 7:21-22). Jesus did not intend the Good News to be proclaimed by word alone, but also by the mighty works of God (1988 Lambeth Conference)*

### Healing as a theme throughout Jesus' work

One reason many Christians are convinced that healing is at the heart of the Gospel is its centrality to the ministry of Jesus. One third of his actual work was directly occupied by healing, and it ran like a thread through everything else he did and taught:

#### a) The Messiah's Manifesto

At the start of his ministry, when Jesus 'published his manifesto' (Luke 4:14-21), he described his purpose in terms of healing: *'He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind ...'*

Healing would mark him out as the Messiah. Indeed, when John the Baptist later expressed doubts about him, it was to his acts of healing that Jesus pointed as the ultimate proof that he was 'the one' (Luke 7:18-23).

#### b) Proclamation and Demonstration

In line with his manifesto, Jesus used healing as a powerful and tangible sign of the Kingdom of God (John 9:1-3). His preaching and healing went hand in hand (Matthew 9:35)

#### c) Full Salvation

In other words, Jesus brought wholeness to those he encountered, a wholeness which was spiritual and physical. When someone came to him to be healed of some physical infirmity, he

would sometimes pronounce them forgiven of their sins - he healed them spiritually, too (Mark 2:1-12). (Remember, the same Greek word can mean both 'healed' and 'saved' - see session 1).

### Some case studies

Look at some examples of Jesus' healing encounters with people. Ask yourself: What brought this person into Jesus' presence? How did Jesus respond to/deal with the person? How did the person respond?

Mark 1:40-end - the man healed of leprosy

Mark 2:1-12 - the paralytic brought by friends

Mark 5:24-34 - the woman with the issue of blood

Luke 7:37-end - the woman who anointed Jesus' feet

John 5:1-15 - the paralytic at the pool

John 9:1-41 - the man born blind

### Some characteristics of Jesus' Healing Ministry

a) He listened

Not just to the person's words, but 'to the person' (e.g.. the woman at the well in John 4; the paralytic in Mark 2).

b) He challenged

Where change was required (the woman caught in adultery in John 8; the man at the pool); or where evil was involved (those possessed by evil spirits).

c) He touched

A very important ingredient - as in the case of those with leprosy. (We should remember, though, that there are those for whom 'touch' has had hurtful associations in their lives).

d) He asked:

"What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51), "How long has he been like this?" (Mark 9:21), "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6)

Rather than 'assuming', Jesus involved the person in the encounter; he drew them into dialogue, he asked them to present their real needs.

e) He forgave

The word means 'release'. We need to: receive God's forgiveness, forgive others, forgive ourselves

### Jesus' victory over evil

No account of Jesus' healing ministry is complete without reference to his confrontation with the forces of evil. Jesus contradicts the Disciples' ready assumption that illness is always a punishment for sin (John 9:1-3).

However, in the broadest sense there is a link between sickness and sin: they are both things which spoil God's creation, and are therefore ultimately evil in origin.

This link is most obvious when some illness is directly ascribed to the work of evil spirits (e.g. the blind and mute man, Matthew 12:22; the crippled woman, Luke 13:11,16; the boy with seizures, Mark 9:17-18). Opinion is divided upon the question of how far some of these 'diagnoses' are merely a reflection of the understanding of the day. However, some of the confrontations are real enough; most notably the man of *Gerasa*, occupied by a whole 'legion' of demons (Mark 5:1-13).

Whenever Jesus comes up against satan and his works, he shows complete authority over him (Luke 4:33-35); this includes his encounters with suffering and disease.

In his ministry, Jesus declared war on the forces of evil (Luke 11:20), and won that war by his



victory on the cross (John 12:31-33). His authority over both sickness and sin were made possible by that victory.

That authority he shares with his followers (Luke 10:17-19). It is the basis of the ministry of healing.

## Session 3: The Healing Ministry in Today's Church

*'In most parts of the Anglican Communion today the healing ministry is pursued, along with the preaching of the Gospel, in obedience to Christ's command, and is seen as a normal part of the ministry of the church to its members, and as a sign of the power and truth of the Gospel in evangelism.'* (1988 Lambeth Conference)

### Healing Today: Why?

Why does the healing ministry of Jesus (see session 2) continue today in the church? We can answer in three ways:

#### a) Jesus' Presence

Quite simply, Jesus is the same today as he was then. He is still present amongst his people by his Holy Spirit, and to encounter him still brings wholeness. The old hymn, "*At even, ere the sun was set*" expresses this very well.

When the apostles first ministered healing after Jesus had 'gone away' (Acts 3), they stressed that it was still he who was present and active as the Healer (v 2-16).

#### b) Jesus' Commission

We see Jesus calling an ever-widening group to share with him in his healing ministry. First, he alone ministers healing. Then, he sends out the Twelve, giving them the command and the authority to preach and to heal (Luke 9:1-6). Next, a wider group, the Seventy-two, is called and sent (Luke 10:1-9).

This process is not ended by Jesus' departure; the Apostles soon discover that Jesus' Commission (Matthew 28:16-end) is to include healing (Acts 3 etc). Within a short time we see the ministry widespread in the growing church (e.g. Acts 8:4-8; 28:7-9; 1 Cor 12:9,28; James

5:13-16).

### c) Jesus' Body

The healing ministry has been described as 'The Body of Christ bringing the touch of Christ'. Just as with his earthly body Jesus touched people, changing them inwardly and outwardly, so now through his 'Body', the Church, he still offers that touch. Those who offer the laying-on of hands with prayer do so as representatives of the whole body, as 'the hands of Christ'. It is not surprising, therefore, to find 'gifts of healings' listed as one of the attributes of 'the Body' (1 Cor 12:9).

This is why the true home of the healing ministry is the local church. Indeed, the other aspects of a church's life - caring, worshipping, learning, serving, fellowship - are all channels of God's healing too.

This is also why Christians should warn against those who point to themselves as 'healers', or who offer some form of 'miraculous' healing apart from the full Salvation (mind, body and spirit) which is found in Christ.

### Healing Today: How?

#### a) Creating structures

If this ministry properly belongs in the local church, how is it to be organised? The answer to this will vary from church to church, but some of the following are common:

- **Healing Services**

These are valuable as a way of giving healing a higher profile and focus in church life. The URC have four 'guidelines' for such a service:

  - it should be within the Christian community at worship and open to the Holy Spirit
  - there should be a Gospel proclamation, and statement of

faith

ministry should be a shared act between ordained and lay members

the person may state briefly why they wish for prayer

- **Ministry during normal services** Some churches make the healing ministry available in an explicit way within the context of every service. For example, (a) in combination with the administration of communion, (b) after the service, (c) at a particular point in the building, (d) by indicating from one's place that help is required.
- **Ministry Team** This is a group of people given a measure of recognition as acting on behalf of the church to pray with/listen to individuals. They may be deployed during or after worship, or in homes, hospital etc.. It is wise for such a team to have agreed guidelines, a measure of training and some sort of referral procedure.
- **Healing Prayer Groups** Such a group may not be involved in direct contact with individuals, but can be thought of as 'bringing them into the presence of Christ' as, by analogy, people did during Jesus' earthly ministry (e.g. Mark 2:3-12).

#### b) Necessary Ingredients

Though our structures may vary, certain ingredients should be common to all:

- **Have Faith** Jesus sometimes linked healing with the faith of the recipient (Mark 5:24-34), but that is not its basis: its basis

is God's power and love. If anything, the onus of faith is upon the minister; the one who offers the person to Jesus, and offers Jesus to them (e.g. Mark 2:3-12; Matthew 8:5-13; Acts 3).

- **Avoid 'Formula' Thinking**

We must avoid thinking in terms of a correct 'formula'; for instance organizing our ministry in a particular way; or running a Healing Service in a certain style; or using the correct words in a prayer. Again, God's ability to heal does not depend on us, but on him.
- **Be open to God**

Although healing does not depend on what we do, we must avoid getting in the way of God's working; by our lack of faith, or by worship which somehow doesn't leave room for God to act.
- **Laying-on of hands with prayer**

This is recognized as the central action in the ministry of healing (e.g. Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23-5; Luke 4:40; Acts 9:17; 28:8). Those offering it do not do so as individuals in their own right - still less as 'experts' - but as representatives of Christ's Body. It also involves the value of human touch (see Session 2 also).
- **Anointing with oil**

We don't know if Jesus himself used it (the disciples did: Mark 6:13). But oil had great significance for the Jews (e.g. Ps. 133). The Christ was 'the anointed one'. The Church from earliest times has valued its use (James 5:14-16). For many centuries its significance with relation to healing was forgotten, but for most of this century in the C of E (and since 1968 in RC) this has been re-established.

## Session 4: Christian Listening

*"...the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous; and his ears are attentive to their prayer..."*

*1 Peter 3:12*

*"...He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The sovereign Lord has opened my ears... Isaiah 50:4-5*

Listening is a vital part of our relationship with God: He is a God who speaks, and who hears. But it is also a vital part of our relationships with one another:

*"The first service that one owes to others in fellowship consists of listening to them. Just as the love of God begins with listening to his word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer; at a conference for his pastors, 1939)*

Listening to others may seem a fairly straightforward matter, but we are often not as good at it as we think. There is such a thing as 'bad' listening. But as we learn to listen well, and in the Spirit of Christ, it can be a great gift to offer to another person - a way of serving him or her.

### Good listening is healing

Listening was involved in Jesus' ministry of healing. He didn't just impose his solutions upon people, but drew them into dialogue. He asked them to present their real needs:

"what do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51)

"How long has he been like this?" (Mark 9:21)

"Do you want to get well?" (John 5.6)

When someone feels they are being heard and understood it can help them to face up to their needs. *"If someone is in a 'climate of listening' they will say things they wouldn't have said before". (Cicely Saunders)*

Good listening is hospitality

Rather as if they were guests in our own homes, we should treat with respect and generosity those whom we welcome into this 'climate of listening'.

As with Jesus' listening, it is not for us to manipulate people or to force our own answers upon them: "*Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place*" (Henri Nouwen)

Good listening is costly

We will need to give:

- Availability    we may be called on to listen when it is least convenient.
  
- Concentration    we will need to give ourselves fully to the act of listening (and we should recognise those occasions (e.g. illness) when we don't have the strength to do so).
  
- Discipline    time management; confidentiality; withholding our own needs and opinions.
  
- Faith    faith will see beyond the person's present need and situation.
  
- Openness    we should be able to feel another's pain/confusion (though without being swamped by it).

Good listening can be learnt

There are certain helps, or guidelines which we can follow:

- Reflect back what is said by the speaker and avoid imposing your own interpretation, judgement or solution
- Avoid assuming you know what their problems are, how they're feeling, etc..
- Ask open rather than closed questions (i.e. "how did you feel about that", rather than "did that make you feel very angry?")
- Adopt an open posture
- Those trained in counselling can often share simple tips such as these with the untrained.

#### A listening attitude.

Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:3-9) is about our openness to God's Word: but it can easily be applied to our openness to the words of other people:

Some fell on the path: hard, trodden-down ground. The seed just bounced off. At one extreme, your words can just bounce off me; they are not heard on any level.

Some fell on stony ground: the soil is shallow. The seed grew somewhat, but without putting down decent roots. I appear to be listening, but am not really paying attention; your words are not really registering.

Some fell among weeds: the seeds took root and grew, but so, even more strongly, did the other plants, soon choking the seedlings. I hear what you say, but your words trigger off thoughts of my own concerns and needs; I am soon too pre-occupied with them to hear you.



Some fell on good soil: the seeds took root and grew into healthy plants.  
I am open to hear you, to empathize and enter into your thoughts and feelings.

## Session 5: The Healing Ministry: Where do I Fit In?

*All the Baptised, and not only the clergy, can be involved in the Church 's ministry of healing.  
(Lambeth Conference, 1988)*

Firstly, two important points:

We do have a part in the healing ministry.

We will take part primarily as members of our own churches.

Quite how we take part will vary. But there are certain principles to bear in mind.

### Prayer

Any effective healing ministry will be built on prayer: in groups, prayer-chains, as individuals. All should take part in this, and for some this often 'invisible' ministry will be where they fit in - it will be their 'calling'.

### Service

With all areas of ministry there is always a danger that we put those called to a more public ministry on a pedestal; or even that they themselves have feelings of pride about their calling. This can be true for those involved in the healing ministry - e.g. being one of those in 'The Ministry Team', or sharing in the laying-on of hands in a service.

So we need to remember that the word most used to describe ministry in the NT is diakonia, meaning service. A deacon is a servant of others in humble ways, such as waiting at table (Acts 6:1-6). Jesus described his own ministry in these terms (Mark 10:45).

## Gifts

There is a popular idea that the healing ministry is for certain people with a special gift. Now, there do appear to be instances of this: we see it occasionally in the experience of the Church, and it is hinted at in the Bible. But this is not the main way in which God gives the Gift of Healing - and it can be a sign of a distinctly un-Christian approach to healing.

Far more important is the understanding of the 'Gift' of healing as something which is given at the moment of ministry. As we, in faith, and as part of the Body of Christ, offer the touch of Christ in some way, God honours that offer with a gift of healing. Each event is a 'gift of healing'. Perhaps that is why St Paul speaks of 'gifts of healings' in 1 Corinthians 12:9.

A good analogy of this is seen in the feeding of the 5,000: maybe it was only as the Disciples offered the tiny and insufficient fragments to the crowds - risking ridicule and failure in the process - that God honoured the offer and multiplied the food.

## **Some Common Questions:**

### 1. Why are only some people healed?

We can give a number of partial answers to this:

Clearly, while our world has sickness and suffering in it, we cannot expect the healing ministry to provide a complete escape route from it. Even Jesus' earthly healing ministry did not provide complete and permanent physical healing.

Besides, Jesus' ministry clearly did not have the removal of all physical suffering as its main aim. Even in his most remarkable healings, the healing was a means to an end; to point to the Kingdom of God, and especially to the spiritual wholeness which could be enjoyed in that

Kingdom. So if we ask complete physical efficacy of the healing ministry we are asking for the wrong thing.

The alternative to a healing ministry which has difficult gaps in it is no healing ministry. And yet if we are to be obedient to Christ we must continue to "offer the prayer of faith for the sick" (James 5:15).

We can let the Bishops have the last word on this one: *There remains a mystery why one person recovers and one does not when there has been equally faithful prayer for both, but, acknowledging God's sovereignty in all things, we continue to offer this ministry. Even physical impairment can be used to God's glory and, for the Christian, death itself is swallowed up in victory. (Lambeth Conference, 1988)*

## 2. Are all Jesus' miracles of healing to be expected now?

Jesus promised that his followers would do what he had done (John 14:12), and the anecdotal evidence from the Church, across history and through the world, is of a whole range of healings. So our answer must be 'Yes'.

At the same time, Jesus gave short shrift to those who demanded a miracle simply to satisfy their curiosity or their doubt (Matthew 12:38-9). It is vital that we understand healing within the true wholeness that God offers: a wholeness which includes his friendship, his peace, his forgiveness. Once we have our minds fixed upon him, rather than upon our ailments, we will want to receive all that he offers as 'healing', whether or not that includes physical healing of our bodies.

## 3. What is the place of faith?

Much harm can be done by too rigidly linking (lack of) visible healing with (lack of) faith, and all talk of faith should be in the context of a well-balanced understanding of Christian healing

which includes more aspects than the purely physical.

Yet all prayer should be expectant, believing that God will act (James 5:15). True faith, though, will also have the eyes to see God answering prayer in ways other than the one envisaged!

Jesus sometimes linked healing with the faith of the recipient (Mark 5:24-34), but that is not its basis: its basis is God's power and love. If anything, the onus of faith is upon the minister; the one who offers the person to Jesus, and offers Jesus to them (e.g. Mark 2:3-12; Matthew 8:5-13; Acts 3). (see session 3.)

#### 4. Why does God allow suffering in the first place?

How long have you got?! This question has had more gallons of ink and acres of paper (not to mention hot air) used up on it than any other. Perhaps just one or two useful things can be said here:

God cannot be said to cause suffering, any more than he can be said to cause sin. Both, as we have observed, stem from the evil which seeks to spoil God's creation. He himself designed it to function perfectly without either of those things. Sickness and death, and even natural catastrophes, are all part of the dysfunction of creation (Romans 8:20-22), which Genesis chapter 3, speaking poetically, traces back ultimately to man's disobedience of God.

More suffering than we like to admit, including some illness and 'natural' disasters, can be traced back to the cause of human wrongdoing or irresponsibility: though not always that of the sufferer! Man's ability to cause such havoc is, ironically, a God-given ability: for he gave the gift of free-will, the ability to choose to do right - or not.

### 3      **Seeking Wholeness Together:**

## **A Parish based Lent Course**

(by Revd. Ian Wills)

#### **Suggestions on how to use the material:**

Each session can be given as a single presentation followed by discussion using the suggested or other relevant questions. Alternatively the sessions can be divided down into shorter segments with questions and discussion being used to intersperse the teaching.

It is important that all the material in each session is covered before moving on to the content of the next session.

It will always be appreciated if leaders are sensitive to the degree of confidence and trust there is in the groups worked with. People who are un-used to working in groups may prefer to start their discussion times in pairs or in small groups which could feedback to the leader and whole gathering in plenary session.

The text of each session can be copied, edited, displayed and/or circulated in any form the leaders may choose.

There are currently no OHP masters with this course, but transparencies can be used effectively as a presentational aid, if developed locally.

## Session 1: Seeking Wholeness

### What do we mean by Wholeness?

Wholeness is our goal as Christians, wholeness through Christ who promises us life in all its fullness, wholeness that will renew us in body, mind and spirit.

Wholeness, might at first only seem to mean fitness and/or health, but for Christians wholeness equates to the biblical concept of SHALOM/PEACE.

*Bp. Morris Maddocks, Journey to Wholeness, 4&5: "(In the Bible) Health meant good relationships with God and man. When Bp. Stephen Neill talked about health and the Bible he used to add two more relationships which he considered should be in good order for a healthy way of life: with oneself and with the soil. ... We do not serve God well if we fail to care for our own health, especially our spiritual health. Nor do we give worship to our Creator by polluting or destroying his creation. For our health it is important that we relate to the soil and to all creation, particularly the animal kingdom. These relationships were all considered important for the well-being of God's people. The Hebrew word for this healthy state, with well-ordered relationships, was SHALOM, which means much more than our usual translation of peace. In fact it is impossible to translate into one English word since it covers total well-being, prosperity, bodily health, contentedness, good all-round relationships and even salvation or perfection and fulfilment. Above all it was the gift of God which could be received only in his presence. It is in fact 'being totally in tune with the song the Creator is eternally singing', being totally healthy in body, mind and spirit. And this healthiness was expressed in community; it was a corporate well-being."*

### Shalom/Peace in the Scriptures:

The presence of peace: Num 6:24-26: The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and **give you peace**

Jn 14:27: Peace I leave with you; **my peace I give to you** I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Rom 8:6: To set the mind on the flesh is death, but **to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace**

Phil 4:7: And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.            2Thess 3:16: Now may the **Lord of peace** himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you.

The absence of peace: Jer 16:5: For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast love and mercy. Lk 19:41-42: As he (Jesus) came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

*QUESTION: Have there been moments or periods in your life when you have felt peace/shalom in this biblical sense?*

### **Where do Christians seek Wholeness?**

SHALOM, wholeness is not a quality of life most of us are called to discover in isolation, we are called to be the "body of Christ", we will need to seek wholeness in the company of others.

The Church's role is to share spiritual "gifts of healings" (1 Cor 12:9) so that together we can discover the particular wholeness God wills for each of us.

St. Paul's use of the term 'gifts of healings' may therefore imply that this will be a shared ministry encompassing many people's gifts and skills:

Medics, health workers, trained counsellors,

Listeners (Acorn, Samaritans), people who pray with others (with or without the laying on of hands), formal pastoral care, proper use of the sacraments (HC, Anointing, Reconciliation)

Carers, informal pastoral care, people who pray for others, all who contribute to the building up of our fellowship as a loving community.



**What we will NOT Find:**

We will not find a few experts, the 'spiritual para-medics', 'dispensing' the grace of God to others, the 'patients'. That is not a style of ministry that is compatible with the healing ministry envisaged here.

We will not find a quick fix for things we want 'put right'. I do not pray that the Lord will cure my colds, but I do pray He strengthen me to do my work until I recover.

We will not find that our 'wants' correspond to our 'needs'.

**What we WILL Find:**

We will find God waiting for us and willing to meet us in our deepest needs.

We will find a ministry of love: 1 Cor. 13:2: "... and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." 1Jn 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God"; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **In this understanding, miracles do not validate love, rather love validates miracles**

We will find spiritual strength: "how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" The great saints of prayer end by losing interest in their physical ills.

When we begin to seek we embark on a journey of prayer and encounter with the living God. It is the most exciting journey any of us can undertake.

**A Statement of Purpose for the Church's ministry of healing:**

**The Church's ministry of healing is a spiritual ministry working alongside medicine and psychology. The Church seeks to help people through its spiritual gifts of pastoral care, prayer, and the sacraments.**

**The primary goals of this ministry are to assist people to a deeper understanding of God's presence with them, and to help them discover the particular wholeness that is God's will for them.**

*QUESTION: Can we begin to see deeper needs than the desire for relief from physical symptoms?*

## Session 2: Why?

### Why does God allow us to suffer?

When we suffer and/or see others suffer many of us ask ourselves "Why does it have to be like this?" The causes of suffering are many: there is suffering that comes from the sin of individuals, from the sin of society, from accidental injuries, from the natural processes of aging, from illness caused by our polluted environment, from illness caused by micro-organisms, from flaws in our genetic blueprints, and from living on an evolving planet.

God would have foreseen the possibility of all this from the beginning. He chose to create, even with all these risks, rather than limit the freedom of the universe in general, and human life in particular, to evolve and be truly free.

### Love and Vulnerability

It has been said that authentic love must allow us choice. In order to be unconditional, love must give without reservation, must not exert control and must be truly involved and vulnerable ("Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense", W.H. Vanstone, DLT, 1977). These are exactly the qualities we see exemplified in the Gospel accounts of Jesus. They are the marks of God's love.

Dr. Martin Israel (a medical doctor and former President of the Guild of Health) has argued that our suffering has to be understood in the context of the redeeming love of God (*The Pain that Heals*, Mowbray, 1981).

Deep or prolonged suffering throws us back onto the deepest resources we have and those are spiritual. God knew suffering would be a part of the risk of creation and in Jesus has provided the way to redeem it. We are free to accept or to reject the SHALOM of the Spirit whenever it calls to us.

**QUESTION:** *If you had to choose between (a) living with the risks and pain of the life you see around you, or (b) not living at all, which would you choose? What difference does your faith make?*

**Why me, Lord?**

NOT: "I must have done something to deserve it". Job shows us that suffering is not always deserved.

NOT: "It must be 'sent' to teach me a lesson." God will not make bad things happen to bring a good result.

There is no simple generalized answer to "Why me, Lord?". Deep or prolonged suffering IS always hard to bear and can drive us to despair, but the scriptures promise again and again that God will not abandon us in our need. In fact, the ups and downs of life will find their deepest meaning only in an understanding of the will of God for me. That is where all the great teachers of prayer find peace.

*QUESTION: Where can we turn when we are gripped by the compulsive search for explanations and/or someone or something to blame?*

**A Few Compensations for Christians to hold on to:**

1. We know that Jesus did not set out to heal all the sickness and disability of his age. He had a deeper purpose, he proclaimed the Kingdom of God, so that "whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3 v 16). Our final goal (not our starting point) as Christians is wholeness, salvation, and eternity.
2. The miracle stories of the Bible are well known and we can give thanks for them. But there are many other Bible stories which tell a different story of suffering and salvation. Jacob, Joseph and Job had to wait a long time for relief, and for Jeremiah, Hosea and others it never came. Fifty-three of the Psalms are laments. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane led him into suffering, not away from it. St. Paul's apostolic ministry caused him repeated suffering (2 Cor. 11), and the Lord refused to free him from his 'thorn in the flesh' (2 Cor. 12). In every generation Christians have learned what it means to follow Jesus in the way of the cross (see Mk. 8 v 34 & 35).
3. God's love is far greater than ours, we must not make God appear more unfair than we are! Gethsemane and the cross will lead us to a deeper understanding of God and prayer.
4. Our bodies have evolved with a strong, natural ability to heal themselves. Many illnesses follow a fairly predictable cycle, and even in secular medicine the unexpected does happen, nevertheless we

believe God is at work in all healing.

5. Christians know that a physical cure is not all that matters. Ill-health can often be the visible symptom of a much deeper emotional and/or spiritual dis-ease. If we seek to relieve the physical symptoms through prayer and do nothing for the deeper causes, we may well overlook the greatest needs of all.

6. God can be powerfully at work in people whose faith enables them to endure the suffering they cannot avoid.

7. We need to be comfortable with our mortality. Christians need to be able to speak the language of salvation and eternity with those who are near to death. The Christian tradition points us to ways of prayer that touch eternity within us. Death will hold no fear for Christians who have walked the margins of eternity with their Lord in prayer.

8. The Church's ministry of healing is our way to share in God's work of love, in pastoral care and prayer. We will not have an answer for everything and we certainly will not bring an end to human suffering, but we will make a difference in the tragedy of our world.

*QUESTION: Has God provided us with enough spiritual resources to cope with the risks of our life and our world?*

### Session 3: What Can we Expect God to Do?

**The interplay of Nature and Grace in healing and wholeness:**

God wills the highest good for each of us at all times, the greatest degree of wholeness (physical, psychological, spiritual, social and environmental) that is possible at each moment.

**BUT** There are limiting factors which restrict our ability to discover the wholeness that God wills.

**AND** God will not disrupt the created order: that is part of the 'self-limitation' of love.

Nevertheless God has provided the potential, *within* the created order, for considerable resources to aid us as we seek wholeness together. The following Table indicates some of the limiting factors which contribute to human suffering (listed down the left hand side) and the kinds of intervention they are likely to respond to (three columns, left to right):

<b>Limiting Factor</b>	<b>Medical Science</b>	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Spiritual</b>
Genetic limitation	Yes	No	No?
Physical Condition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social/Cultural	Yes	Yes	Yes
Family Context	No	Yes	Yes
Psychological Development	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spiritual Openness	No	Yes	Yes
Occult influence	No	No	Yes

(The chart was derived from arguments presented in the essay *'How are People Healed Today? The Relationship Between the 'Medical' and the Spiritual' in Healing'* written by Dr. Bill Lees and Revd. Dr. Paul Fiddes and published in the book "Christian Healing: What Can We Believe?" Edited by Ernest Lucas.)

*QUESTION: Can we accept the principle of limitation in God's responses to our prayer?*

Clearly the Church's ministry of healing needs to be effective in helping people discover the spiritual resources they need. This spiritual ministry will be expressed most clearly through prayer, pastoral care and the sacraments.

Prayer is at the centre of all Christian 'wholeness' ministry. Gethsemane will need to be at the heart of our prayer as we seek wholeness together:

#### **Mark 14 v 32 - 42, the Garden of Gethsemane:**

*'Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."*

When praying the burdens of our own hearts, we will need to learn how to pray as Jesus did: " ... yet, not what I want, but what you want."

When praying with others we will need to learn how to " ... remain (with them) here, and keep awake."

When praying for others we will need to allow God to be God (and not insist on telling the Lord what should be put right, when, and how).

#### **Wants -vs- deepest needs**

The things I want will be conditioned by many things: how I feel at the time, my hopes and dreams, my fears, self interest, etc.. Wanting something badly doesn't make it the best thing I can have - certainly

not from an eternal perspective!

In order to make the journey from our wants to a recognition of our deepest needs we will need to learn to listen to the Spirit of God in our hearts.

Luke 11 v 9 - 13: The encouragement to seek, ask, and knock is, I believe, a personal one. It is a journey of understanding that each of us must make for ourselves if we want to know the will of the Father. God will not tell someone else what YOU or I need to hear!

### **The infinitely varied nature of our journey into wholeness:**

The recipients of NT miracles (examples can be given)

miracles in Christian Tradition (examples can be given)

the recent ministries of, for example, John Wimber, Peter Lawrence

share any personal accounts of prayer, wholeness, and healing

We pray because we love. When we pray we always open the way for the Spirit to be released in people's lives in new ways. We also open the way for occasional, wholly unpredictable possibilities of dramatic change that are sometimes called miracles.

### **Mark 8 v 34 & 35**

Miracles can and do happen, *sometimes*, but we should be careful not to claim more for God than God has done. Usually the way to wholeness will be the way of the cross: the way of "handing over". All of us are called to hand our lives over to God. The Church's ministry of healing is a channel by which we and others can find the love and spiritual resources to do that.

**Yes ...** God loves each of us. God will give us what we **need**. God will not give us what we **want**.

**No ...** Our preoccupations are not God's. The Spirit works through nature. God will not overrule nature.

*Yes ... God IS at work in people who don't get better as well as those who do.*

**QUESTION:** *Can we begin to see the love and grace of God at work in people who find no physical or psychological relief AS WELL AS in those who feel an easing of their suffering when we pray?*

## Session 4: Praying Wholeness Together

### The dynamic process of prayer

The nature of our prayer for one another will be found in the love of God for each of us. The Bible tells us that Christ "always lives to make intercession for them/us" (Heb. 7 v 25), and also that, since we do not know how to pray, "the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8 v 26). When we pray we share in this dynamic, powerful (the strength/power of love), spiritual process.

As we hold people in our hearts in prayer the Spirit of God in us touches their hearts. St. Paul says the Spirit intercedes with us and through us. Our openness to this spiritual process in prayer will always release new possibilities in the Spirit: *'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'* (1 Gal. 5 v 22 & 23), and make available the ever present possibility of change towards wholeness.

We will need to discern the will of the Lord in these dynamic movements of the Spirit. Father, Son and Holy Spirit commune with each other constantly in love and it is God's gift to us in salvation that we too can be drawn into this 'holy communion'. In prayer we can share in the movements of God's love here and now as they hold us and touch us in our needs. The Bible tells us also (Rom. 8 v 22) that the whole creation groans in travail - these are deep movements of God's Spirit in all things.

We all have access to this same Spirit of Christ. All we need to do is be open to the Spirit within us, and respond to these movements in the way the Spirit leads.

### Matthew 26 v 37 - 39 and the cry of our hearts

*'Jesus took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'"*



In the Gospels many people sought Jesus and spoke the cry of their heart to him believing he could meet their need: Lk. 5 v 12, Lk. 7 v 1 - 8, Lk. 7 v 18 - 20, Lk. 8 v 24.

Others expressed the cry of their heart without words: Lk. 5 v 17 - 25, Lk. 7 v 36 - 38, Lk. 8 v 43 - 48, etc..

Jesus own 'cry of the heart' was: Lk. 22 v 42: "... remove this cup from me ..."

*QUESTION: How can we begin to help each other to recognise and express the cry of our hearts to the Lord?*

**Praying MY OWN need:** In times of need we all have a 'cry of the heart' we need to express to the Lord. We may need help to recognise and articulate our need (by sharing with someone we trust: a friend, a Christian Listener, a trained counsellor), but we each need to begin to pray the cry of our heart, and go to the place of Jesus in Gethsemane, and pray as he prayed: " Father, if you are willing, please help me with ..... ; yet, not my will but yours be done." (Lk. 22 v 42) We will also need to be willing, as Jesus was, to accept the Father's will when we begin to discern it.

**Praying WITH others:** When praying with others we will need to learn how to " ... remain (with them) here, and keep awake." The disciples could not stay awake, but we should try to do better! At this point our job is not to pray aloud, but to hold the person and their need in our hearts in the movements of the Spirit within us. The Lord can (and will) do the rest.

We may also need to help the person to find their way to the place of Jesus in Gethsemane for themselves. Everyone Jesus helped in the gospels went and asked for themselves (if they were able to). If the person we pray with is able to, (s)he should begin to express the cry of his/her heart in prayer **for him/herself**. There cannot be a full engagement with the Spirit if the person refuses to pray their own need. If they are not able to do so that is different, and help can be offered and the limitations can also be included in our prayer with and for them.

We should not set ourselves up as 'those who pray', thus implicitly leaving others to be 'those who are prayed for'. The Lord's will is, I believe, that we should all come to know and love Him. We can only begin to do that when we begin to pray for ourselves. You and I had to begin to seek the Lord for ourselves, and others will surely need to begin for themselves too.

**Praying FOR others:** When praying for others we will need to allow God to be God. Our job is to discern the movements of the Spirit within us and pray 'in tune with Jesus' and the Spirit's prayer for the person. The work in this kind of prayer is the work of discernment and open response to what we hear the Spirit praying through us. We will do far more listening than speaking!

When we believe we 'hear', 'see', 'sense', 'feel' the movements of the Spirit for that person we can then translate them into words as best we can and pray them silently or aloud. If we discern His will truly, the Lord will understand and respond. We will then begin to discern that response, and will respond to it in a dynamic, on-going process. This is the true nature of intercession.

*QUESTION: Can we learn to listen to the spiritual journey of others and hold them in our hearts without always demanding 'answers to prayer'?*

**Some of our options in prayer:**

The Benedictine, Contemplative, and Ignatian traditions can be explored by those wanting to open themselves to the dynamic movements of the Spirit in prayer (try your nearest SPCK bookshop).

Prayer Boards, Prayer Chains/Trees, Prayer Lists, Prayer Cycles can be explored by anyone wanting to pray for others, also regular, shared, times of prayer.

Intercessions, open prayer at Holy Communion and Services of Healing, requests for prayer at the Sunday services can all be explored for those wanting us to pray for them.

Private prayer, anointing with oil, and the laying on of hands can be explored for those wanting someone to pray with them.

**Summary:**

The ministry of prayer for wholeness IS NOT just me 'saying prayers' for people. IT IS me taking people into my heart, allowing myself to share in God's love for them, and allowing myself to be drawn into God's heart with them. IT IS journeying with people in the way of the cross.

*Question: Does this understanding of prayer open up new possibilities for our prayer? Would we be willing to learn more about the Christian traditions of prayer and spirituality?*

## Session 5: Christian Caring

### The margins of life and eternity

Suffering pushes us into the margins of life: pain, hospital, disability, dying, depression, grief.

For people who are able to open their hearts to the Spirit, the margins of life can also be the margins of eternity.

The vocation of priest in the Church is a call to live in these margins spiritually, and be able to speak the language of eternity at the crisis points in other people's lives:

births,	making and breaking of relationships,
suffering and pain,	loss and grief,
depression,	disability,
dying,	injustice and oppression.

The Church's ministry of healing offers spiritual resources to people to help them make sense of the margins they find themselves in. If they can begin to orientate themselves they can begin to seek God, know His will, and receive His grace.

A teenage girl recovering from addiction wrote:

*I came here empty, a broken child, scared and in bits;  
blaming the world and everyone in it for my past, my pain and suffering.  
Layers and layers of masks covered me, I hid behind everything;  
Not wanting to see what I had done, what part I had played.  
I lived in a world of fantasy every day.  
You all gave me support, bonds of trust. I started to relax and open up -  
your helping hand, your words of wisdom.  
Owning my past made me get real, looking at ME in a different way, started to heal.*



- Reconciliation of the Penitent - forgiveness (healing), cleansing, ref. Ps. 51 (healing), being set free from sin (healing), coming home to God (healing).
- Anointing with oil an outward and visible sign of the hidden Spirit at work within a person's heart and life (healing)
- Laying on of hands a sign of sharing (healing), a sign of identification (healing) whether formal or informal.

*QUESTION: Can you think of specific occasions when each of these sacraments met (because they were available), or could have met (had they been available) your need.*

## Session 6: Gifts to Share in our Church Life

This session is essentially a time for review and reflection. The purpose is:

1. to give people time and encouragement to see their own needs in the context of all that has been shared about the Church's ministry of healing as the course has unfolded;
2. to give people time and encouragement to consider how the healing ministry of their own congregation might reach out more effectively to people in the local community.

Begin the session with a brief review of the topics covered week by week.

Next outline the choices available to us in local healing ministry as listed below that might be relevant to local needs:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>Ways of prayer</i>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private, personal prayer for others</li> <li>- Benedictine, Ignatian and contemplative traditions</li> <li>- Prayer Boards, Chains, Trees, Lists, Prayer Cycles</li> <li>- Prayer partners, groups, prayer times</li> <li>- Intercessions in church</li> <li>- open prayer at services</li> </ul> |
| <br><i>Pastoral Care</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- helping Christians be good neighbours</li> <li>- Christian listening after services</li> <li>- Church sponsored Pastoral Visitors</li> <li>- Christian Listeners as a known resource in church life</li> <li>- Contact Points</li> </ul>  |

- The Sacraments*
- Anointing with oil during Family Communion on Sundays
  - Use of Holy Communion in people's homes
  - 'Quiet' evening Communion in church
  - Healing services with or without Communion
  - Reconciliation of the penitent

*QUESTION: Which are the most pressing needs for healing and wholeness that we see around us?*

Give people time to consider their own spiritual journey, the support they have received from other Christians, and the grace God has given them.

*QUESTION: What might be my/your/our next step towards wholeness/shalom?*

Take time to consider the goals that could be envisaged for healing ministry to be developed further in the church and the community.

*QUESTION: What might our congregation do to extend healing ministry to people in the wider community and parish who have needs?*

Make sure there is time to pray together for the leading of the Holy Spirit before the session ends.

## 4 Other Options

### **Acorn Christian Foundation: Growing a Healing Ministry**

This course is arranged in five sessions. Acorn's own publicity describes the content as follows:

1. **Seeds of Faith** To help group members to understand the nature and the breadth of God's healing ministry.
2. **Rich Soil for Growth** Explores the attitudes needed for a caring approach to the healing ministry.
3. **Leaves for Healing** Looks at the diverse ways in which healing is experienced, and considers the difficult question of when people are not cured.
4. **Growing a Healing Church** Enables the group to see how the whole church can live as a healing presence in the local community.
5. **Fruit Abundant** A practical session for making plans to develop the healing ministry in and through the church.

The Course material is available from the Acorn Christian Foundation (see page 14 of the Introduction to the Development Pack), price: £10.00, or £12.50 including post & packing.



## Grove Booklet:

The Grove Booklets Pastoral Series, number 44: "Forward in Healing" (Price: £2.50) was originally published in 1990, revised in 1992, and further revised in 2000. Unfortunately the last revision took no account of the introduction of Common Worship, so all its suggestions for group prayer are now out of date. The booklet gives a six session course for groups to use and assumes a willingness to share in prayer and ministry together as the course progresses:

1. **The Mandate**                      To communicate to the participants that the mandate to 'heal the sick' (Luke 10.9) is still addressed to the church, and is primarily fulfilled through prayer.
  
2. **Channels of Grace**              To help us understand the importance of prayer for the ministry of healing, and to learn how to pray supportively in small groups, so as to be better channels of grace.
  
3. **A Definite Touch**                To encourage the participants to pray in a positive way for people with physical ailments and other obvious personal needs, using words and touch in the name of Jesus.
  
4. **Going Deeper**                    To introduce the participants to teaching and experience of inner healing.
  
5. **Guided by God**                    To help participants to be more aware of the guidance that God can give, and to understand the value of gifts of the Spirit in the healing ministry.
  
6. **Putting it Together**              To make participants aware of essential considerations in order to decide what style of healing ministry is right for their own context, and to introduce them to more public ministry in teams.